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A POEM

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE HOUSE OF CONVOCATION

OF

Trinity College,

BY THE REV. GEORGE BURGESS, D. D.



The Poets of Religion.

A POEM,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

HOUSE OF CONVOCATION

OF

TRINITY COLLEGE,

IN

CHRIST CHURCH, HARTFORD, AUGUST 4, 1847.

BY THE

REV. GEORGE BURGESS, D. D.

RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, HARTFORD.

PUBLISHED BY THE HOUSE OF CONVOCATION.

HARTFORD:

PRESS OF CASE, TIFFANY & BURNHAM.

1847.

Nothing but the desire to advance in any manner the interests of an endeared institution, and a wish to cherish, amongst our educated men, the honor and the love of sacred and generous poetry, persuaded the writer to undertake the task of delivering a poem before the Convocation of Trinity College, Hartford. Nothing else has induced him to consent to its publication. In both instances, his refusal was sincere and earnest, and was only overcome by considerations which were not personal.

ARGUMENT.

REMONSTRANCE. SPENSERIAN POETS. MINISTRY. RECOLLECTIONS. CLAIMS. SCENE. VISION. HUMAN HISTORY. AGENCIES. AGENCY OF THE POET. POETRY THE MUSIC OF HISTORY. MOSES. MIRIAM. DEBORAH. JOB. DAVID. SOLOMON. ASAPH. JEREMIAH. ISAAH. THE NATIVITY. THE LAST SUPPER. THE CROSS. THE ASCENSION. PSALMODY OF THE CHURCH. EARLY CHRISTIAN HYMNS. GREGORY NAZIANZEN. PRUDENTIUS. ALFRED. DARK AGES. DANTE. TASSO. FILICIA. MANZONI. LUTHER. GERMAN HYMNS. GELLERT. KLOPSTOCK. HERDER. NOVALIS. CLAUDIUS. STILLING. STOLBERG. SCHUBERT. FRANZEN. TEGNER. MANRIQUE. LAMARTINE. BRITISH POETS. SPENSER. MILTON. POPE. ADDISON. YOUNG. HERBERT. WALTON. KENN. BUNYAN. QUARLES. CRASHAW. KING. MARVELL. HERVEY. MRS. ROWE. DODDRIDGE. WATTS. JOHNSON. GOLDSMITH. METHODIST AND MORAVIAN HYMNS. BLAIR. GRAHAME. COWPER. MONTGOMERY. COLERIDGE. SOUTHEY. WORDSWORTH. KIRKE WHITE. CHARLES AND ROBERT GRANT. HEBER. MILMAN. MRS. HEMANS. POLLOK. KEBLE. UNIVERSAL POWER OF POETRY. RETURN. POETS OF THE LAND. POETS OF THE SPOT. VALUE AND DIGNITY OF POETRY. APOLOGY. AIM. CONSECRATION.



THE POETS OF RELIGION.

I.

As mid the strings an answering note I sought,
"Tempt not the lyre !" a genius seemed to say ;
"If once thy youth the spell one moment caught,
Content thee still to wear thy sprig of bay :
Eve has its ease, and morn its hour of play ;
For sterner toil was given the noonday fire ;
Bear yet a little while thy dusty way,
Nor pause for fancy, nor in bold desire
Of wreaths thou canst not reach, tempt thou the lofty lyre !

II.

The Fairy Queen forbids the Fairy rhyme ;
The bard of Idlesse warns thee from his towers ;
The Minstrel sings, 'how hard it is to climb ;'
And Harold's brow beneath its laurel lowers ;
The virgin's gates are fenced by jealous powers ;
Who fails to win must perish at their feet :
Then flee, light pilgrim, flee th' enchanted bowers ;
Rest, if thou must, on some green wayside seat ;
But haste to find afar thy safe and still retreat.

III.

As yet, nor safe nor still ! In fields of fight
 A spotless banner thou wert pledged to bear :
 The Red Cross streams along its folds of white,
 And pours defiance on the hosts of air :
 They threat the leaguered camp : thy place is there !
 On wings of wind the fiends of battle hie,
 And all thou dar'st, the time draws near to dare ;
 Oh, who shall stand if standard-bearers fly,
 Or change for sportive tilt the conflicts of the sky !

IV.

Those solemn arches heard thy pastoral vow ;
 To guard that board no hand is charged but thine ;
 And forms beloved around thee seem to bow,
 Who live and worship near a happier shrine ;
 Seem their kind eyes along those aisles to shine,
 As when thy voice their mounting fervor led ;
 That voice whose prayer could soothe their pale decline ;
 That voice which rose above their clay-cold bed ;
 And has that voice a strain less sacred than the dead ?"

V.

I paused and turned ; again, the call came near
 From those fair walks that love their holiest name ;
 It spoke of song to youth and genius dear,
 Song that may die, yet dying may enflame :
 And with it hopes, and with it memories came ;
 Hopes that must soar with yon yet dawning sun,
 And grateful memories with their gentle claim,
 Binding the scholar when his race is run,
 To hang the chaplet high, where first the flowers are won.

VI.

While thus I mused, light breezes from the West
 Swept the thin clouds that spread their fleecy trail
 Where, like a conqueror in his gorgeous vest,
 The reddening day rode downward o'er the vale :
 On the broad river swelled the transient sail,
 And silver ripples caught the beams of gold :
 Beyond, green hills, a vast, encircling pale,
 Clasped the sweet meadows like some peaceful fold ;
 And in the North, far, far, the long, low thunder rolled.

VII.

To fancy's glass, that all things dreams to life,
 Earth lay within that narrow scene outspread :
 Clouds hung above, the clouds of woe and strife,
 But all the higher heaven rich glory shed :
 On its calm course, time's sweeping current sped,
 Its banks resounding with the toilsome throng ;
 And judgment pealed afar its trumpet dread,
 And guilt recoiled, amidst its march of wrong,
 And the earth travailing groaned, "why wait His wheels so long!"

VIII.

The dream grew stronger, and the scene more vast ;
 Those distant hills like Alps or Andes frowned ;
 While o'er the plain the mighty ages passed ;
 And nations' voices swelled the rushing sound :
 Tall cities rose, with fanes and castles crowned ;
 The wealth of realms in yellow harvests sprung ;
 The step of armies shook the blood-stained ground ;
 Fleets to the winds their venturous streamers flung ;
 And round their thrones and laws embattled millions clung.

IX.

The reverend senate sat in halls of state ;
 Down the plumed ranks I saw the chieftain dart ;
 Held the wise judge the impartial scales of fate ;
 Hurried the keen-eyed merchant in the mart ;
 Bright figures grew beneath the touch of art ;
 I saw the sage amidst his listening ring ;
 I saw the patient scholar toil apart ;
 I saw the priest his living censor bring :
 I saw not yet the bard, nor heard th' impassioned string.

X.

At length it came ; it came ! As when at morn
 From the thick grove a thousand voices float ;
 As when the clash of cymbal, fife and horn
 Swells through some mountain gorge's iron throat ;
 So on my soul the strains of glory smote ;
 So streamed the varied lays in one high chime ;
 The lover's plaint, the minstrel's jocund note,
 The ode's wild thrill, the drama's pomp sublime,
 The flood of epic song, the hymns of every clime.

XI.

Mingled they came ; and all that breathing scene
 To careless glance had seemed a troubled maze ;
 But ever a soft sunlight fell between,
 And beauteous order shone beneath its rays ;
 The comet is not lost, though far it strays ;
 The spheres have music such as seraphs hear ;
 So the full torrent of ten thousand lays
 Rolled an harmonious measure o'er mine ear ;
 Song was the pulse of life, and song to heaven was dear.

XII.

In ancient lands where springs the day to birth,
 I saw a chosen shepherd as he sang,
 " In the beginning how the heavens and earth
 Rose out of chaos : " then with timbrel's clang
 On the seashore the song of freedom rang ;
 Then fought the stars from heaven with Barak's thrust ;
 Then, pierced by wounded friendship's sternest pang,
 The patient patriarch, seated in the dust,
 Sang to the Arab winds, his sad, victorious trust.

XIII.

A ruddy boy sang carols by his flock ;
 Their stripling champion sang a maiden train ;
 A hunted exile trod the desert rock ;
 A generous mourner wept the kingly slain ;
 A warrior bard had triumph on his strain ;
 A harper bowed where that dread ark abode ;
 A crownless father fled across the plain !
 So passed a prince along his wondrous road,
 And ever where he passed, a psalm's sweet echoes flowed.

XIV.

A son's calm forehead wore his sacred crown ;
 A son's rich hand his sacred harp-strings tried ;
 He sang in peaceful days of wise renown,
 The heavenly bridegroom and the mystic bride ;
 But from his own bright shrine he trod aside,
 And idol sorceries stole his grayer years ;
 Then, rushed the solemn lay that wailed his pride,
 And told how vain the joys, or cares, or fears,
 That fill the golden cup where guilt shall leave but tears.

XV.

Then, in that temple's halls the priestly saint
To awful hymns the choral psaltery sweeps :
Then on the gale is borne the tuneful plaint
Where by the willowed streams the captive weeps :
Then, while on ruined towers the moonbeam sleeps,
The patriot seer tells o'er his scroll of woes :
Then, his lone watch a loftier warder keeps,
The blood-red vision forth from Bozrah goes,
And far the desert smiles, and blossoms as the rose.

XVI.

A psalm from heaven along the pastures fell,
Fast by a city slumbering deep in night :
The King of kings had come with men to dwell ;
And the glad skies burst forth in song and light :
A holy song was heard, when, meek in might,
To the last strife for man's dear sake He bowed ;
Hymns were His cries, while hung His soul in flight ;
And when He passed by yon blue archway proud,
Followed the songs of earth, beyond the enfolding cloud.

XVII.

They pierced the lattice from those upper rooms,
Where in rapt love the cup of grace was poured ;
They swelled victorious o'er the place of tombs ;
Up from the nuptial train in joy they soared ;
They cheered the bench of toil, the homely board,
The lonesome exile's desert way beguiled ;
To their soft fall his oar the boatman lowered ;
And where the mother lulled her listening child,
She sang of Jesus' love, and angels stooped and smiled.

XVIII.

O names most bless'd, though all on earth unknown !
 There is a page where all resplendent stand !
 Ye whom I saw where, in your chambers lone,
 Ye touched the chords that thrilled from land to land ;
 Till where the Atlantic kissed the Culdees' strand,
 And where the morn broke purpling o'er the Nile,
 That " holy, holy," met the seraph band,
 That first with earthly notes in Milan's aisle
 Shook all th' adoring throng, and shook the echoing pile.

XIX.

Him, who, with hot Byzantium's mitre tired,
 Longed for his Nazianzum's lowly cell,
 Though his rich lips the vast assembly fired,
 And princes hung entranced within the spell ;
 Him who had loved not wisely yet too well,
 I saw where, hid from men, he strove to sing :
 Faint was the flame, and rough the numbers fell ;
 Yet his own soul was on the bird's light wing,
 And caught, above the whirl, sweet gales of balmy spring.

XX.

In the red sunset of her Pagan fame,
 When o'er her plains the Gothic vultures hung,
 Rome held Prudentius : his the foremost name
 That bound to Christian strains that classic tongue :
 He on the martyrs' graves his lilies flung ;
 He rushed from prostrate shrines, too long adored,
 And fast to Cæsar's knees a suppliant clung,
 And for the captive, Rome's new grace implored :
 Th' arena rang with hymns, and sank the brutal sword.

XXI.

Alaric, Theodoric, Clovis, Charlemagne,
 Ye long-haired kings that walk on Roman dust,
 Who treads so bright amidst your iron train ?
 Alfred, the wise, the brave, the pure, the just ;
 Alfred, who chased the fiends of war and lust ;
 Alfred, who spoils from fifty battles bore ;
 Alfred, who hung the victor's blade to rust ;
 Then sang, a psalmist, with a sage's lore,
 And fenced with royal prayers, his Albion's well won shore.

XXII.

Now on the hills and plains and streams came down
 A mist that heaved like billows on the deep :
 It breaks by gleams, and here a bannered town,
 And there a castle nodding o'er the steep :
 On Eastern plains the knightly chargers leap :
 Gray convent turrets rise in pensive vales :
 And solemn strains round ancient ruins sweep,
 Blending for man's sad state their plaintive wails
 With strong, heroic deeds that live in minstrel tales.

XXIII.

Lo, from the screen emerged to clearer light,
 Florence, the land where freedom blooms or bleeds !
 And exiled Dante dares the gates of night,
 Mounts the dread car that owns no mortal steeds ;
 Scowls o'er the abyss, its direful secret reads ;
 Then, crag by crag, ascends the toilsome way :
 On ! on ! 'tis thine own Beatrice that leads !
 Soon shalt thou tread the heights of upper day,
 And heaven and hell shall gleam from one wild, wondrous lay.

XXIV.

As softly rich as when a tender flute
 Melodious steals across some orange grove,
 While eve descends, and stars seem listening mute,
 Of Godfrey's triumph and Erminia's love
 Was Tasso's tale ; then far it swept above ;
 And dazzling armies hung in Salem's sky :
 Th' enthusiast lyre was crushed ; but like the dove,
 Sweet peace came answering to his contrite cry,
 And in his convent cell he died as breezes die.

XXV.

But now, no arms of song assail mine ear ;
 No fabled chiefs yon turbaned hosts control :
 O for a shout to bring all Europe near,
 Where leagured Austria waits the royal Pole !
 As from the cliff the broken billows roll,
 Fled from Vienna's wall the Moslem trains ;
 O for a song for every Christian soul !
 Then rolled the pomp of Filicaia's strains,
 And throbbed with Europe's joy through all her swelling veins !

XXVI.

Sad to my heart that o'er each Southern throne
 In jewelled falsehood towers the Roman shrine ;
 Yet shall that heart the hallowed music own,
 That breathes along the sweet Italian line ;
 Thine, Filicaia ! and, Manzoni, thine !
 Thou, purest of all pencils of romance !
 Thou, whose bright song its flowers disdained to twine
 Around the reveller's cup, or conqueror's lance,
 But built the cross of love o'er fields of change and chance.

XXVII.

I pass the Alps ; along their Switzer side,
 Hark, like the wind that scales the icy steeps !
 It is the hymn of Luther ! Far and wide
 From old Germanian towns the tempest sweeps ;
 O'er the broad oaken forests on it leaps :
 He wields the axe ; and Babel's pillars fall ;
 Then in his Catharine's arms, he smiles or weeps ;
 And lifts in sacred song his clarion call ;
 Oh, bravest heart on earth, since heaven unclosed for Paul !

XXVIII.

Oh, rich and dear the good Teutonic tongue !
 And rich and dear its thousand holy lays ;
 By humble hearths, in solemn church-yards sung,
 Where the green lindens hide the grassy ways :
 Rist, Gerhard, Angelus, from elder days,
 These are the voices of the German's home,
 Where by the broad Missouri now he strays,
 Where Elbe spreads onward to the ocean foam,
 Or where with thunder bursts fair Bremen's ancient dome.

XXIX.

When royal Frederick and Theresa strove,
 And blazed on Saxon heights the camp-fire red,
 Day after day through Leipsic's murmuring grove,
 Repose and health a gentle student led :
 His name was Gellert, and his fancy fed
 On no light splendours of a poet's dream,
 But in the region of pure joy and dread :
 Goodness he loved, and goodness was his theme,
 And his calm verse flowed on, a bright and nurturing stream.

XXX.

Not such the torrent of deep song that gushed
 Over the harp of Klopstock : on the air
 The pinions of bright angels round him rushed,
 And all creation's voice was praise and prayer :
 He sang Messiah ; from this vale of care
 As high his heart, his numbers soared as high,
 As when a spirit mounts the heavenly stair,
 Casts, with a song, its mortal vestments by,
 And sees th' eternal gates with meek, undazzled eye.

XXXI.

The courtly prophet of a doubting age,
 Who leaned in Weimar's park on Wieland's arm,
 I cannot praise ; yet, Herder, on thy page
 The patriarch's word has left its hoary charm :
 Genius was thine : if faith, with quick alarm,
 Shall bid thee think thou tread'st on holy ground,
 And put thy sandals off, yet, safe from harm,
 She loves thy Syrian plains, with dew-drops crown'd,
 And joys to hear thy hymn through Mamre's oaks resound.

XXXII.

Nor all unmixed the praise that waits on thee,
 O young Novalis, with thine azure glance,
 Following the changeful lights thou may'st not see,
 And bathing in the heaven's bright blue expanse,
 Where thou, with Plato, knew'st the mystic dance !
 In deepest hearts thy thoughts had readiest room :
 But thy Moravian parents, in thy trance,
 Were with thee still ; and amaranth flowers shall bloom,
 By Christian fingers set, round thy too early tomb.

XXXIII.

And bards, I deem, and faithful bards were they,
 Though oft the rhyme to lofty periods change ;
 Claudius, who trilled his playful, tender lay
 From the green covert of his village grange ;
 Stilling, strange walker in a world more strange ;
 Stolberg, the noblest name an age enrolled ;
 Schubert, who lives the soul's wide world to range,
 And truths like gems to fix in words like gold,
 And tell what saints have been, and be what saints have told.

XXXIV.

I saw two poet prelates of the clime
 Which that brave Charles and each Gustavus bred ;
 Stars of the North, they cheered this latter time :
 Franzen was one, a pure and honored head ;
 And one was he who Frithiof's legend said,
 And sang the lambs his pastoral hand had bless'd :
 Once at his side, so strange our destined thread,
 I sat, a youthful wanderer from the West,
 And listened with fond ear, the brightest German's guest.

XXXV.

Another age ! Along a Spanish plain
 Chargers and knights bestrewed the bloody ground :
 They searched a warrior, foremost of the slain,
 And on his breast a bloody scroll they found ;
 There, his own death-song George Manrique bound,
 Those solemn couplets, made so lately ours,
 That, age by age, o'er pomp and greatness sound,
 Like the deep knell from some old, cloistered towers,
 Then roll away, away, to rest's eternal bowers.

XXXVI.

Another scene ! Emerging from wild wars,
 France for her struggling freedom sues release :
 Dinted her helm, her bosom seamed with scars,
 She longs for exiled faith and law and peace :
 Hark ! Lamartine's high numbers roll and cease ;
 Blending the ancient fire, the modern thought,
 The song of Sion and the harp of Greece,
 What Charles had planned, or Fenelon had taught,
 Or good Saint Louis prayed, or strong Napoleon wrought.

XXXVII.

Now the sweet accents of our fathers' land,
 The glorious accents of the wise and free,
 Came to my ear from many a silver strand,
 Mingling their voices with the conquered sea !
 O England, mother, burns our heart for thee !
 For truth has made thee sacred ; and so long
 As from thy rocks the baffled waves shall flee,
 Shall he who thinks what thou hast been be strong,
 Nerved for his saintly war by thy religious song !

XXXVIII.

The master of my lyre, apart, alone,
 On Mulla's bank his mighty fable wove :
 Untired he watched, and saw the elfin throne,
 The cave, the castle, the enchanted grove :
 The champion knight the cowering monsters drove,
 The self-same knight with many a shield and name ;
 For faith, for love, for temperance still he strove,
 Still strove the hallowed warrior and o'ercame ;
 And the bright queen's reward was virtue's peerless fame.

XXXIX.

And yet a greater ! old, and blind, and poor,
 A father sits, and bending daughters write ;
 A while the song shall seek its way obscure,
 Then roll in floods of everlasting light ;
 The song of Milton ! up the starry height,
 Where Uriel stands, bright regent of the sun,
 The soul with him shall wing his Raphael's flight,
 And look o'er Eden lost and Eden won,
 And, yet a pilgrim, hear the strains of home begun.

XL.

And noble was his verse, whose lofty plan
 From link to link th' eternal chain pursued :
 "The proper study of mankind is man,"
 He said, and sang of man's supremest good :
 On the low meads of earth-born taste he stood,
 Yet with calm skill could point th' adorer's eye,
 Till nature's God in nature's face it viewed,
 While the charmed rhyme, that flowed unruffled by,
 In memory still must flow, till memory's self shall die.

XLI.

Near him was one, who brought his fresh, fair youth
 From the good lessons of a pastor's hearth,
 To gild his native tongue with beauteous truth,
 With graceful rhetoric, and with blameless mirth :
 All palms he bore o'er wealth and power and birth ;
 But crowned his Christian deathbed best the lays,
 Where chant the spangled heavens all round the earth,
 Where mercies past the rising soul surveys,
 Or where the peaceful flock mid verdant pastures strays.

XLII.

E'en mightier thoughts from spangled night came down
 On him whose harp the night's lone musing chose :
 The dark hours fled, and each with heavier frown,
 The sad reflection of his inward woes ;
 Then, with the midnight stars on stars he rose ;
 Not smooth the strain, but grand and strong, and deep ;
 And there the mourners of all lands repose,
 And still, with Young, their thoughtful vigils keep,
 And at Narcissa's grave their own loved lost ones weep.

XLIII.

I saw a courteous shepherd, as he pass'd,
 The chimes of Salisbury floating to his ear ;
 The garb of highborn state aside he cast,
 And sought the rural pastor's modest sphere,
 And trod the house of prayer with reverent fear :
 The saintly Herbert ! From his tranquil cot
 Came the quaint song that makes the church-porch dear,
 And binds the country priest to love his lot,
 While peace with calm, white wings bends o'er the fragrant spot.

XLIV.

His tale was told by one whom next I spied,
 The gentle angler, singing in the glen ;
 A poet he, in heart and blood allied
 To that thrice reverend name of holy Kenn ;
 Kenn, who returning from the strife of men,
 Found in his lowlier walks no time to grieve,
 But from the labors of a cheerful pen,
 Left the dear hymns that yet at morn and eve
 O'er countless Christian beds their balmy blessing leave.

XLV.

A dreamer lighted on a den, and slept,
 And when he woke, the pilgrim's progress told :
 In every tongue, though scarce the lyre he swept,
 His pictured page its poetry unrolled :
 Song of the young, and solace of the old !
 Oh, matchless guide along th' eternal way,
 Whose fable's robes so light the truth enfold,
 Each graceful line in all its form display,
 And melt beneath the gaze as twilight melts to day.

XLVI.

And there was earnest Quarles, whose moral line
 So well could preach o'er man's terrestrial doom ;
 And fervent Crashaw, rapt in hopes divine
 Till his heart soared as on an angel's plume ;
 And mitred King, who mourned in radiant gloom ;
 And patriot Marvel, with his moonlight flow ;
 And pious Hervey, musing o'er a tomb ;
 And the veiled tresses of seraphic Rowe ;
 And Doddridge, when from heaven he caught th' inspiring glow ;

XLVII.

And one whose head with better wreaths was bound
 Than all that rovers to Parnassus gain,
 And yet no stranger on Parnassian ground :
 Though now, perhaps, on thoughtless lips and vain,
 The songs of Watts be coupled with disdain,
 Yet oft to hear shall taste delighted bend ;
 Yet shall they sound from many a heaving fane ;
 Yet infant tones with angel themes shall blend ;
 And with th' expiring saint to one bright home ascend.

XLVIII.

Nor e'er rose England's loftiest sage so high,
 As when, all vainer wishes cast behind,
 He bade thee, when thou listst the suppliant cry,
 "Pour forth thy fervors for a healthful mind,
 Obedient passions, and a will resigned :"
 Nor spot more loved could Auburn's bard portray,
 Than where the village preacher stands enshrined,
 "Truth from his lips prevails with double sway,
 And fools that came to scoff, remain in tears to pray."

XLIX.

And lo, with downcast eyes, and souls above,
 Of pilgrims of plain garb you swelling host !
 And lo, another band, whose burning love
 Bears the dear name of Christ, their only boast,
 From Afric's cape to Greenland's icebound coast !
 With each the tide of song and music went ;
 Humble the best, and all unskilled the most ;
 Yet myriads of strong hearts the chorus sent,
 That rose with Wesley's fire, or Gambold's bless'd content.

L.

Forth from the casement of a Lowland manse,
 Blair looked on graves that sparkled in the dew ;
 The Grave his theme, the faithful poet's glance
 Passed upward from the shades of solemn yew,
 And life in death burst glorious on the view :
 From such a scene, with memory's fondest skill,
 The Sabbath's bard his holy picture drew,
 Where flocks and clouds slept tranquil on the hill,
 And rose the wide earth's prayers, like smoke-wreaths calm and
 still.

LI.

Who yonder walks, his playmates at his feet,
 Lingering at sunset by the winding Ouse ;
 Then, home returning, draws his fireside seat,
 And sheltered safely from the evening dew,
 Looks from his loophole o'er the world of news,
 And sings his morning song, that, upward nursed,
 Climbed from the Sofa to the heavenliest muse ?
 He sang of comfort while his heart-strings burst,
 And poured the stream of life, and died in fancied thirst.

LII.

A happier fate, nor less renowned a song,
 Was his, who still his life's long honors wears !
 Still may Montgomery stay to wear them long ;
 They blend no stain amid his hoary hairs !
 And when to that departed train he fares,
 Whose tender forms he oft beheld so near,
 Shall thousands of sweet voices bless with theirs,
 The harp that woke and dried the sacred tear,
 And bless the gentle eye they loved yet knew not here.

LIII.

From a wild land of lofty floods and lakes,
 Three mighty streams of song come side by side ;
 The strain of Coleridge like a cataract breaks,
 Then through the plain its waves refreshing glide ;
 As vast is Southey as his Severn's tide ;
 As deep is Wordsworth as his lake's deep blue,
 Whose breast, alone with heaven, the mountains hide :
 Oh, happy then was Britain when she knew
 Her three divinest songs to British faith so true !

LIV.

And next I looked where Gray's once favorite bowers
 To sacred strains the lyre of genius strung :
 From toils and victories of his midnight hours,
 White to the tomb passed beautiful and young,
 For his own dirge his own sad verse had sung :
 But to the heirs of Grant's true worth and name,
 Was given the brilliant mind, th' enchaining tongue,
 The soft rich hymn, so various yet the same,
 That bears to coming saints their undivided fame.

LV.

Best of the bright, and brightest of the good,
 Before me, graceful in the scholar's gown,
 Next, mid applauding scholars, Heber stood,
 And wore unmatched the youthful laureate's crown,
 Then, trod the radiant paths of pure renown :
 His song, his heart, his life, to Christ he bore ;
 And, when, beneath the palms he laid them down,
 His glorious chant of One who passed before,
 Died o'er his grave, and came, returned from every shore.

LVI.

The meet companion of his lyre I spied
 In the robed student of that stately fane
 Whose Gothic towers look down on London's pride :
 And grand and gorgeous as an Eastern train
 Floats the majestic pomp of Milman's strain !
 Master of words, like orient pearls that fall,
 When in the dust sad Zion wails her slain,
 Or the wild shout goes up from Babel's hall,
 Or the glad martyr hastes to heaven's high festival.

LVII.

Like mellow tints that end th' autumnal day,
 Like fragrant blushes of the moss-girt rose,
 Felicia bloomed, Felicia passed away,
 The song still deepening to the heavenly close ;
 But, where in love the household altar glows,
 Or patriot freedom lifts the steady spear,
 Or on in tears the way-worn pilgrim goes,
 That bird-like, woodland note shall still be near,
 And gushing sounds of home the wandering heart shall hear.

LVIII.

On Scottish moors, in humble labors bred,
 In the kind rigors of his faith and clime,
 The Bible and the sky young Pollok read,
 And the old tales of conscience and of crime,
 And chose in lonely hours his theme sublime :
 Far on, beyond the mortal mists he pass'd,
 And backward glancing, told the course of time,
 Its wondrous course, so wondrous till the last,
 In numbers bold and harsh, like the strong pibroch's blast.

LIX.

Once more, once more ! How sweet a note was there !
 From oriels of high Oxford forth it steals,
 And all the gales the gentle echoes bear,
 Where'er the Sabbath bell of England peals !
 On rolls the sacred Year its awful wheels ;
 And every sacred theme has dear regard :
 He sings so sweetly that so true he feels :
 Oh, though a thousand colder strains be marr'd,
 Still clasp the purer church her tenderest, holiest bard !

LX.

So, mid earth's many voices, passed the voice
 Of hallowed song, far up th' eternal hill :
 I saw the nations tremble, and rejoice,
 And weep, and rally, at its mighty thrill ;
 Lord of the fancy, o'er the realms of will,
 Th' anointed poet fixed his welcome throne :
 And my full soul bowed down and blessed the skill
 That wakes in human hearts their deepest tone,
 And lifts them high as heaven, and clasps them for its own.

LXI.

Meanwhile mine eye had crossed the Western main,
 And a fair spot its gaze in passing drew ;
 And while I caught no unfamiliar strain,
 That little spot to fill the vision grew ;
 The fancied scene was yielding to the true :
 Our own broad river in the sunset glowed ;
 Our own green hills shut in the fading view ;
 It was the valley of my dear abode,
 And my own city's chimes along the breezes flowed.

LXII.

And here, I said, where once my country's morn
 Saw her young bards attempt the epic height,
 Saw her own song in infant beauty born,
 With Barlow, Trumbull, Hopkins, Humphreys, Dwight ;
 Here, where the church whose very prayers are bright
 With all that poets love, her watch-tower rears,
 And calls the Muses to her sacred light ;
 Here should the hallowed verse find eager ears,
 And pour its burning swell far o'er perpetual years.

LXIII.

Such strains have floated round those walks and walls,
 From one who changed the youthful harpstring bold
 For every task whose urgent labor calls
 The pastors' pastor to his well watched fold :
 And one whose strength his lyre but half has told,
 And half concealed; and one whose brilliant way
 A brother's heart in silence fond may hold;
 And one, whose gentler praise I must not say,
 But the wide English world gives back that kindest lay.

LXIV.

Oh precious, precious be the warbled charm
 Within whose flow such might of sweetness lies ;
 Might, to high deeds that lifts the strenuous arm,
 And draws high thoughts, the wisest from the wise ;
 That lures the fount of tears from hardest eyes ;
 And sways all souls with love's divinest art :
 Sing he who may : if loftier bards despise,
 Sing like the songsters of the grove apart,
 And trust to every wind the numbers of the heart.

LXV.

So wooed the Muse, and so the Muse has won ;
 And half in shame, and half in pensive joy,
 Through one bright hour the man has lingered on,
 In shades that once could chain the ardent boy :
 Oh, but too happy in his light employ,
 Might but his verse some youthful bosom lure
 From sloth that taints, and trifles that destroy,
 To love the flowers whose vernal hues endure,
 To court the glowing harp, and let that harp be pure :

LXVI.

Not in brief play the earnest mind to waste,
 Not from stern tasks life's little space to rend ;
 But truth's firm pile to twine with wreaths of taste,
 And man's deep strength with woman's grace to blend ;
 O'er storms of care a rainbow-arch to bend ;
 With bounding step the hidden snare to spurn,
 Then on, far on, th' exploring pinion send,
 Till faith to sight, and praise to rapture burn,
 And with one swan-like hymn the spirit home return.

LXVII.

THOU, on whose altar all my toils are laid,
 Accept e'en this ; e'en this be seems thy shrine !
 Thy children come, nor thankless nor afraid ;
 For all they have, and all they are, is thine !
 Song is thy gift : be here that gift divine
 Winged by thy love, and chastened by thy fear ;
 And while, like setting stars, our lives decline,
 Still in the East let purer orbs appear,
 And strains that seraphs sing find answering accents here !



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